

## What is Meningococcal Disease?

Meningococcal (men-in-jo-COCK'-ul) disease is caused by a bacterial infection in the blood and fluid around the brain. When brain fluid is infected it is called "meningitis". Meningococcal disease can spread quickly and lead to death.

## How is Meningococcal Disease Spread?

Kissing, coughing and sneezing can spread the disease through bacteria in saliva and nasal fluids. The bacteria are not as contagious as the common cold or flu.

## Who is at Risk and What Can Be Done?

Those in close contact\* with an infected person are at highest risk of getting the disease and may need to be treated with antibiotics. The Health District or your doctor will tell you if you should be treated.

*\*People in the same household or childcare center and others who have had direct contact with saliva or nasal fluids are at highest risk.*

## What Are the Signs and Symptoms?

- Sudden high fever
- Headache
- Stiff neck
- Nausea and vomiting
- Sensitivity to bright lights
- Confusion
- Loss of consciousness
- Rash (see picture below)
- In infants and young children fever and vomiting may be the only signs.



*Sometimes a reddish-purple rash may appear anywhere on the body. It may be hard to see the rash on dark skin.*

## Can Meningococcal Disease Be Treated?

- Yes, it can be treated with a number of effective antibiotics.
- It is **very** important to start treatment early.

## What Should I Do if I Think My Child Has Meningococcal Disease?

- **You know your child best. If you suspect your child has this disease contact your doctor immediately.**
- **The sooner your child gets medical care, the better the chances of full recovery.**

## What Else Can Parents Do?

Researchers have found a link between meningococcal disease and exposure to cigarette smoke. Do not smoke or let others smoke around your children.

## Where Can I Get More Information?

For more information on meningococcal disease contact your doctor or call Southwest Washington Health District at (360) 397-8182

Additional resources:

Washington State  
Department of Health  
[www.doh.wa.gov/topics/menin.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/topics/menin.htm)

Centers for Disease Control  
and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal\\_g.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/meningococcal_g.htm)



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## Meningococcal Disease



**Understanding the Disease  
and  
Recognizing the Symptoms**

**It May Save Your Child's Life**